

# CONCLUSIONS



Evaluation ■ RiverLink Vision

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## EVALUATION OF THE RIVERLINK VISION

BASED UPON THE OBJECTIVES OF THE project, the design team evaluated the proposed design concepts to judge if the project goals were achieved.

**Goal 1:** *Reconnect the neighborhoods of the westside of Long Beach to the Los Angeles River and its natural and cultural heritage.*

**Objective:** Identify barriers to river access and propose solutions to overcoming them in a way that encourages universal access, walking, bicycling, and mass transit use.

- The RiverLink vision overcomes obstacles that impede pedestrian movement and bicycle travel by enhancing designated pathways to safely accommodate both forms of transit as well as provide universal access to the river greenway.
- The design of pathways encourages walking and bicycling by improving the pedestrian experience along the streets and designating Class II and Class III bike lanes, shared roadways, and bicycle boulevards.
- The design of pathways enhances pedestrian safety by separating pedestrian traffic from vehicular traffic along the street with landscaped lanes, street trees, and seating areas.
- The design of pathways provides amenity zones along the street for stopping and resting, and is incorporated into the thematic design of the neighborhoods.

**Objective:** Integrate multiple modes of transportation into a unified system between the neighborhoods of the westside of Long Beach and the Los Angeles River.

- The RiverLink vision optimizes transit connections by denoting and enhancing existing bus stops along transit routes.
- The Drake Greenbelt creates connections to surrounding neighborhoods with bike and pedestrian pathways. The greenbelt connects into the neighborhood at several key street points and at Drake Park, allowing pedestrian access into the park system. The LARIO Bikeway accesses the site at several points and there is a bike-friendly connection to the Daisy Parkway at Anaheim Street. Automobile access is enhanced for those who need it.
- Wrigley Heights Park creates connections to surrounding neighborhoods along Golden

Avenue and via the pedestrian overpass spanning the Blue Line tracks. This allows unobstructed pedestrian and bicycle movement into and out of the park. Additionally, the improved connections to the LARIO Bikeway provide access regionally.

**Objective:** Enhance the image of the westside of Long Beach and create connections to local attractions such as the Los Angeles River, the Aquarium of the Pacific, and downtown Long Beach.

- The RiverLink Vision enhances the westside of Long Beach paths, edges, districts, nodes, and landmarks, promoting a legible image and assist in wayfinding and navigation towards parks and neighborhoods.
- The design of pathways enhances wayfinding and directs people toward the Los Angeles River through thematically designed signage, sequential planting schemes such as those occurring in the medians, and streetscape paving patterns.

**Objective:** Reveal the cultural heritage of the westside of Long Beach neighborhoods throughout the RiverLink system.

- The RiverLink vision reveals the heritage and cultural history of the westside of Long Beach neighborhoods through careful selection of design elements and materials for park design and associated amenities based on the built environment character for that particular neighborhood. Local artists are invited to further strengthen these connections through designs of gateway monuments and pathway banners

**Goal 2:** *Increase and enhance the amount of safe, accessible, public parklands, and open space in the westside of Long Beach.*

**Objective:** Identify potential park sites adjacent to the Los Angeles River and propose strategies for integrating them into an open space network and greenway system connecting neighborhoods, schools, parks, and shopping, with the Los Angeles River.

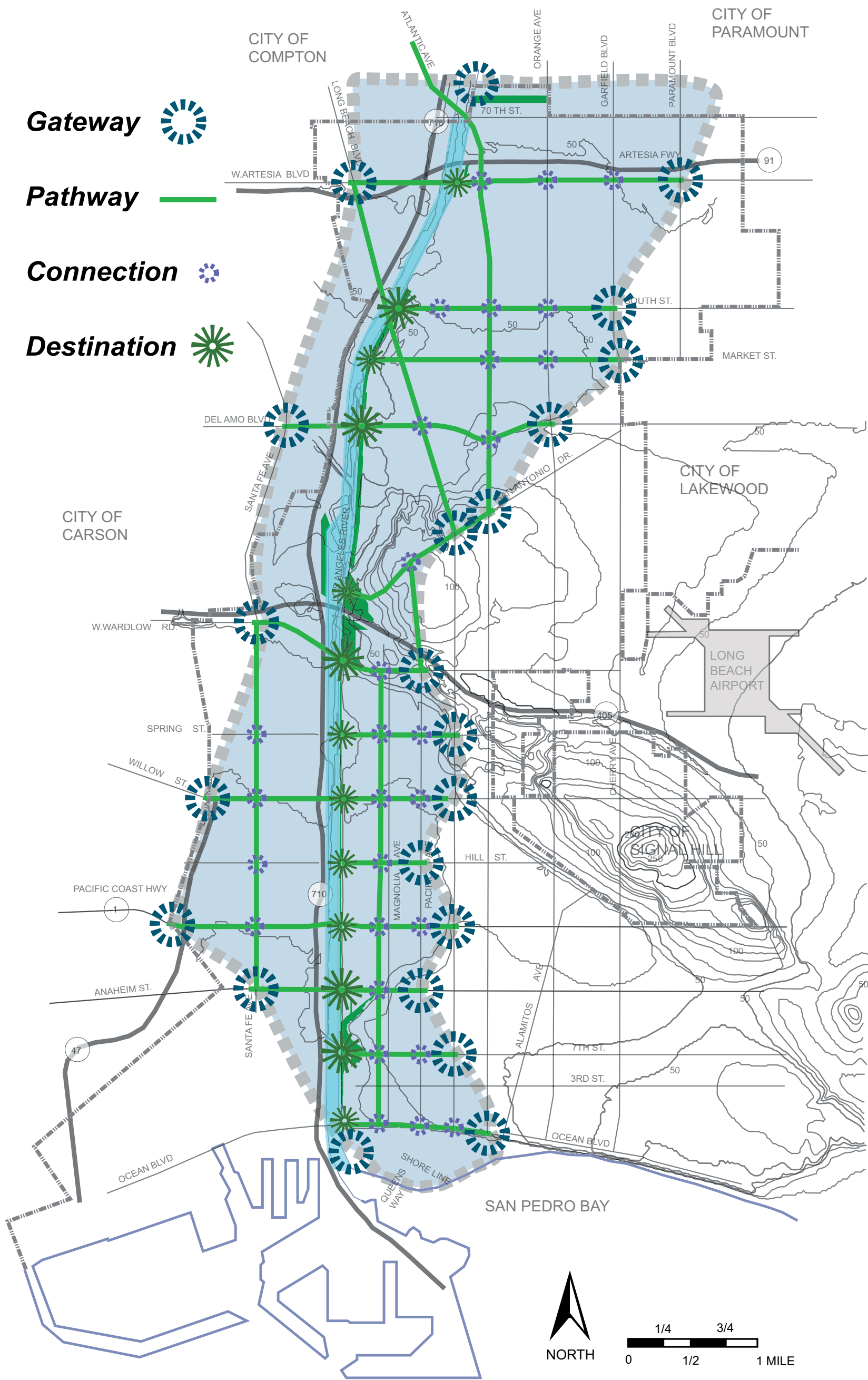
- The RiverLink vision designated and linked 176 acres of continuous parklands and open space along the Los Angeles River. The plan also designed and programmed 114 acres of open space in the westside of Long Beach, all of which are connected to neighborhoods, parks, schools, and shopping areas through gateways, pathways, connections, and destinations.

**Objective:** Propose creative strategies to redefine open space in order to increase the total amount of open space in Long Beach and to promote open space connectivity throughout the region.

# WESTSIDE OF LONG BEACH

## RIVERLINK SYSTEM

SOURCE: BASE MATERIALS PROVIDED BY CITY OF LONG BEACH, CA



- The RiverLink vision suggests opportunities and connectivity strategies, such as re-thinking landscaped streets as parks, creating alleys of opportunity, encouraging ephemeral open spaces, and constructing green roofs to increase open space acreage towards the city’s goal of eight acres per 1000 residents. The vision also provides a framework towards future open space creation along the Los Angeles and San Gabriel Rivers.

**Objective:** Enhance the urban nature of the westside of Long Beach, connecting people to the natural environment through the creation of urban habitats and demonstrations.

- The RiverLink vision enhances the urban nature of the westside of Long Beach by recognizing existing habitats and re-creating potential habitats, thus facilitating the movement of targeted potential species. This connects the people of the westside of Long Beach to the ecological character of Southern California and Long Beach.
- The RiverLink vision creates wetland and filter beds that will biologically cleanse urban runoff using native vegetation, and provides design strategies that coordinate with the phased remediation processes occurring on spotlighted sites.
- The Drake Greenbelt enhances connections to the natural and physical environments by exposing natural processes such as biological water treatment and wildlife habitats onsite, and allows people to interact firsthand with nearly all parts of the site.

**Objective:** Mitigate the urban heat island effect as well as pollution from vehicular transportation.

- The RiverLink vision provides the framework for the development of an urban forestry program, promoting the ecological and social benefits of urban trees.
- The design of pathways optimizes the urban forest by significantly increasing the number of canopy trees and understory shrubs along the street edge, improving the air quality of the westside of Long Beach and providing other environmental benefits.
- The Drake Greenbelt and Wrigley Heights Park optimize the urban forest by planting different levels of trees and shrubs of various ages, which, among other qualities, cleanse pollutants from the air, provide wildlife habitat, and separate pedestrian uses from harsh industrial areas.

**Objective:** Propose strategies for the adaptive reuse of existing sites and infrastructure as well as strategies mitigating site pollution using na-

tive vegetation and coordinating with city remediation efforts.

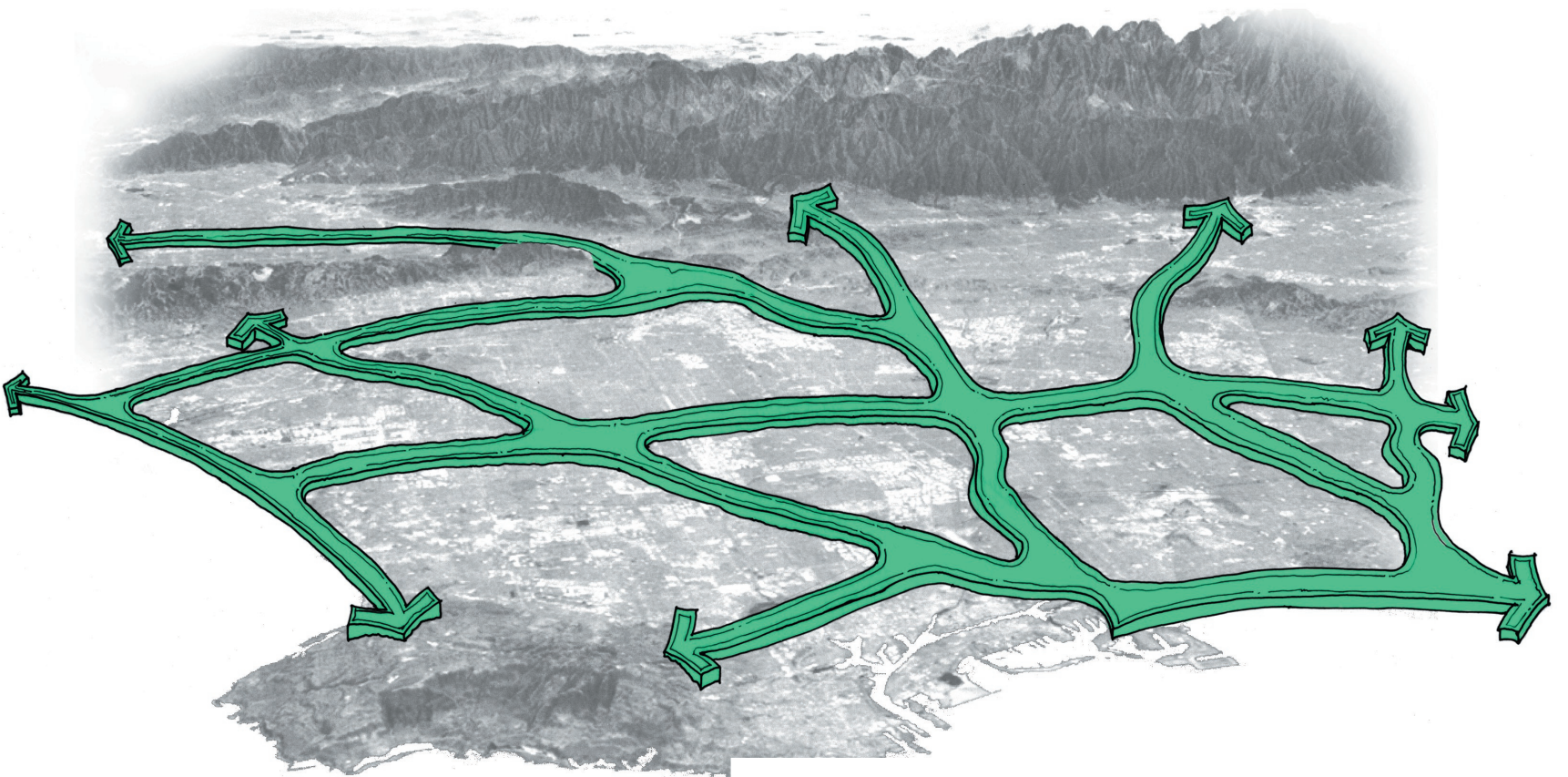
- The Drake Greenbelt encourages the creative reuse of existing infrastructure and damaged sites by converting former railroad properties to public parklands, and by adapting an existing warehouse at the Mini-Transit site to house features of the Children’s Adventure Playground and the community gardens.
- Wrigley Heights Park encourages the creative reuse of existing infrastructure and damaged sites by using natural processes to remediate a former industrial brownfield, and using some of the remnant features to showcase these processes. The native grass hillocks recall the monitoring wells used during site cleanup and relate to the natural recovery of the site.
- Additionally, Wrigley Heights Park coordinates with site remediation process by working within a phased implementation process. Because the remediation process takes many years to successfully complete, site development will follow a phased time line, with amenities added once the designed location is deemed safe for human and wildlife activity.

**Objective:** Provide opportunities for outdoor education, integrating classrooms with the natural environment.

- The Drake Greenbelt enhances educational opportunities by creating a demonstration garden, a children’s garden, and wetlands interpretive areas. These features inform visitors about ecological processes that take place on an urban site, as well as about nature itself. The Edison Elementary School and other local schools can coordinate its classes to take advantage of these educational features.
- Wrigley Heights Park enhances educational opportunities by revealing the bioremediation process used to cleanse the onsite oil contamination, through interpretive signage. The amphitheater is the interpretive centerpiece, while smaller wetlands viewing areas provide information regarding natural wetlands and associated flora and fauna. The hillocks allude to the extent of the contamination plume.

**Objective:** Provide opportunities for outdoor recreation integrated with open spaces across the westside of Long Beach.

- The Drake Greenbelt provides recreational opportunities with improvisational open spaces that can be used for many different formal and informal activities.
- The Wrigley Heights Park provides recreational opportunities by preserving the existing driving range. This amenity is open to the public and is the only driving range in the



*Potential Greenway Development Across the Los Angeles Basin  
(Adapted from: NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratories, 2000)*

westside of Long Beach. The improvisational open spaces allow the community to walk, rest, picnic, or take part in a myriad of other activities at their discretion. These uses are all low maintenance and fit in with the character of the adjacent neighborhood.

**Goal 3: Promote citizen participation in the public process for open space planning, development, and stewardship.**

**Objective:** Formulate a place-based planning framework that will assist in the development of a community vision for the RiverLink project and will promote citizen participation in all stages of the process.

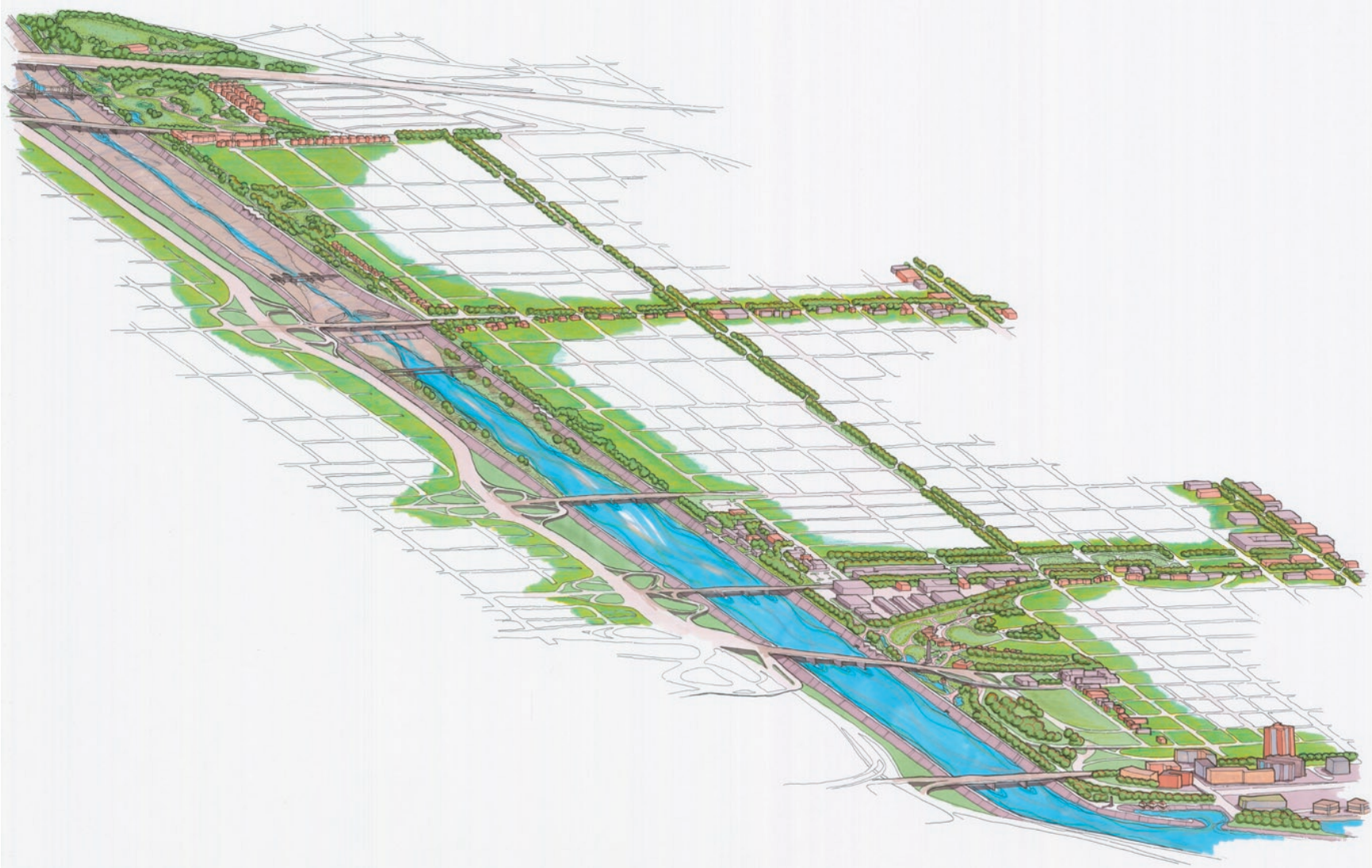
- The RiverLink vision provides a planning framework promoting citizen involvement in the planning process, which creates community ownership over neighborhood parks and amenities.
- The RiverLink vision proposed design strategies based on community input derived from eight outreach meetings.

This evaluation indicates that the RiverLink vision meets the project objectives stated at the beginning of this document and fulfills the goals of the San Pedro Bay Estuary Project, The Long Beach Department of Parks, Recreation and Marine, and the 606 design team.

## CUMULATIVE EFFECT OF GREENWAYS

AS A VISION DOCUMENT, THIS PLAN encourages further planning efforts addressing connectivity across the region. The significance of this vision is great in relation to Long Beach, yet it is just a small piece of what needs to happen over the entire Los Angeles basin, connecting people and wildlife to major open space reserves.

Greenways, developed as a modular system along the Los Angeles and San Gabriel Rivers and their tributaries will create significant north/south connections. Greenbelts developed along under-used right-of-ways will connect the smaller local parks and complete the system. The ‘kit of parts’ approach will allow for individual pieces to be implemented at any time and serve their function while other parts of the system are being put into place. This is the ultimate vision for connecting people to open space, of which the Long Beach RiverLink is a significant step. ■



*Bird's Eye View of RiverLink System in the westside of Long Beach, California*